

# NEWS

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United States Department of Justice  
U.S. Attorney, District of New Jersey  
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***Christopher J. Christie, U.S. Attorney***

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## Vineland Man Indicted in Scheme to Trade Cocaine for Guns

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(More)

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CAMDEN – A Vineland man was arraigned on a federal Indictment today for his scheme to trade cocaine for firearms while he was under indictment by the State of New Jersey, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

Edward Perez, 30, who is currently serving a state prison term on unrelated charges, made his first appearance in federal court and was arraigned on a two-count federal Indictment before U.S. District Judge Renée Marie Bumb. The Indictment charges one count each of conspiracy to receive firearms while under felony indictment in a court in the State of New Jersey and conspiracy to distribute cocaine.

The Indictment, which was returned by a grand jury on Jan. 29, 2008, describes a scheme in which Perez, Jorge Maldonado, 33, and Alfred S. Austin, 36, both of Vineland, conspired to provide three ounces of cocaine to an individual, who unbeknownst to them was cooperating with Special Agents of the ATF, in exchange for 10 firearms. During the time period covered in the Indictment, Jan. 3, 2007 to Feb. 23, 2007, Perez and Maldonado were both under felony indictment on unrelated charges in the State of New Jersey.

According to the Indictment, on Jan. 3, 2007, Perez and Maldonado discussed trading cocaine for guns with the cooperating individual (“CI”). On Feb. 15, Perez and Maldonado agreed to provide the CI with three ounces of cocaine in exchange for 10 guns. On Feb. 23, Perez provided approximately 83 grams of cocaine to Maldonado and Austin for them to give to the CI. Later that day, Maldonado and Austin gave the cocaine to the CI and an undercover ATF agent in exchange for guns which were displayed to them. Maldonado and Austin were arrested on the spot.

Maldonado pleaded guilty before Judge Bumb on May 9, 2007, to one count each of conspiracy to distribute cocaine and receiving firearms while under indictment. Maldonado is scheduled to be sentenced on May 9. Austin pleaded guilty before Judge Bumb on July 13, 2007, to one count of conspiracy to distribute cocaine and is scheduled to be sentenced on May 5.

Count One of the Indictment, which alleges a conspiracy to receive firearms while under indictment, carries a maximum penalty of 5 years in prison and a fine of \$250,000. Count two, which charges conspiracy to distribute cocaine, carries a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison and a fine of \$250,000.

In determining an actual sentence, the judge to whom the case is assigned would, upon a conviction, consult the advisory U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, which provide appropriate sentencing ranges that take into account the severity and characteristics of the offense, the defendant's criminal history, if any, and other factors. The judge, however, is not bound by those guidelines in determining a sentence.

Parole has been abolished in the federal system. Defendants who are given custodial terms must serve nearly all that time.

Despite indictment, each of the defendants is presumed innocent unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

Christie credited Special Agents of the ATF's Camden Satellite Office, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Mark Potter in Philadelphia, and the Vineland Police Department, under the direction of Chief Timothy Codispoti, with the investigation leading to the Indictment.

The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Matthew Skahill of the Criminal Division in Camden.

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Defense Attorney: Ralph Jacobs, Esq. Haddonfield